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ABSTRACT

Lerner has proposed an equity model used in the determination of fair allocations which suggests that if two individuals are perceived as being similar to and in a positive relationship with each other, there are two possible rules that give fair allocation of rewards. If individuals see each other as occupants of positions the characteristics of which are independent of any individuals occupying them, and see each other's behavior as the product of their respective positions, the equity rule applies. If they are perceived as persons who might occupy any position and whose behavior stems from individual characteristics, an equality or parity rule of allocation will be followed. A social-perception test of the influence of personal and positional relationships on allocations was conducted with male and female undergraduates. Results indicated that: (1) definitions of relationships are important determinants of allocation for both sexes; (2) sex differences exist for traditionally sex-typed individuals only when relationships are not dependent clearly either on person or position; and (3) both sexes see allocation of rewards as a determinant of future interactions. (Author/HLM)

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Perceived Relationship, Sex-Role Orientation, and Gender Differences in Reward Allocation

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Perceived Relationship, Sex-role Orientation, and, Gender Differences in Reward Allocation

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Equity theorists have maintained that a fair distribution of rewards between two individuals is one which reflects the ratio of their inputs (Adams, 1965; Walster and Walster, 1975). A recent paper by Lerner (1977), however, suggests that the equity rule is only one of many used in determining fair allocations. He proposes a model which suggests that if two individuals are perceived as being similar to and in a positive relationship with each other there are two possible rules that will give fair allocation of rewards. If the individuals see each other as occupants of positions, whose characteristics are independent of any individuals occupying them, and see each other's behavior as the product of their respective positions, the equity rule applies. If, on the other hand, they are perceived as persons who might occupy any number of positions and whose behavior stems from their individual characteristics or make-up, an equality or parity rule of allocation would be followed, regardless of relative input.

The equity model and Lerner's model make quite different predictions in an allocation situation if the perceived

relationships are varied, particularly if inputs are unequal. Equity theory suggests that interpersonal relationship would make no difference, and that allocation should be strictly according to input. While Lerner's model predicts an equitable allocation for the positional relationship, it would predict an equal allocation for the personal relationship.

A study designed to test these alternatives also provides an interesting context in which to examine sex differences in allocations. Since it has been found that males tend to allocate more equitably than females when equity implies an unequal allocation (Leventhal and Anderson, 1970; Leventhal and Lane, 1970), it might well be that males and females perceive ambiguous relationships as positional and personal, respectively, and allocate accordingly.

We designed a social-perception test of the influence of personal and positional relationships on allocations. We had two questions in mind in conducting the study:

1) Do allocations follow an equity rule for positional relationships and an equality rule for personal relationships?

2) If a relationship between individuals is unclear, will females perceive it as "personal" and males as "positional," and will they allocate accordingly?

A number of pilot studies enabled us to design a booklet containing three allocation stories, one involving a personal relationship, one involving a positional relationship, and one which was ambiguous as to relationship. The basic script of the allocation story was as follows: Two university students volunteer to help out with a task. In the same length of time, one student does twice as much work as the other. After working they are unexpectedly offered a reward of $20. The manipulation of relationship was achieved by prefacing an allocation situation with a description of two previous occasions upon which the individuals had interacted. The dimension involved in the manipulation was the constraint of behavior by role, just one aspect of the person/position distinction. Behavior in the positional relationship was constrained by role; the individuals did something <u>because</u> their roles demanded it. In the personal relationship, role did not constrain behavior; the individuals did something although their roles did not demand it. In each case, the individuals helped one another in these previous occasions. A complex counterbalancing scheme was worked out to control for content of the allocation situations, content of the relationship manipulations, combinations of the two, and order effects. In addition to the independent variable each booklet contained a number of dependent measures which were

taken after each story. The main dependent measure in each condition was the subject's perception of the proper allocation of reward in the situation described. In addition, there were a number of manipulation checks, both direct and indirect. Subjects also filled out a Bem Sex Role Inventory (Bem, 1974).

We ran 144 undergraduates from the University of Waterloo, 72 males and 72 females. Each subject filled out a booklet that contained all three conditions and the respective dependent measures. The final measure was the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI). The basic analysis, then, was a 2 (sex of subject) X 3 (interpersonal relationship) analysis of variance, with interpersonal relationship as a within-subject variable.

Results and Discussion

Perceived Relationship (Table 1)

Personal and positional relationships were briefly defined for the subjects, and they were asked to indicate which relationship existed in the preceding story on a two-point scale (1 indicated "personal" and 2 indicated "positional"). The main effect for interpersonal relationship was reliable at $p<.01$ ($F(2,274) = 132.01$). As can be seen in Table 1, both males and females perceived the intended relationships in the personal and positional conditions. In the ambiguous condition, however, both sexes

indicated that they felt the relationship was more likely positional than personal in nature. A similar measure using an 11-point scale (-5 = person to +5 = position) yielded similar results ($F(2,274) = 221.53$).

Allocations (Table 2)

Subjects were asked to indicate how the money should be divided in each case. The allocation scores were grouped by overall frequency into 3 groups, and scored 1, 2, and 3. (A score of 1 indicates 50%, 2 indicates 60-68%, and 3 indicates 69-80%. These scores refer to the percentage going to the individual doing the most work.) Again only the main effect for interpersonal relationship was reliable ($F(2,274)=9.88$, $p<.01$). As can be seen in Table 2, subjects allocated more equally in the personal condition (untransformed mean of 55.65%) than in either the positional (untransformed mean of 59.32%) or the ambiguous (untransformed mean of 58.55%) conditions.

Sex Role Orientation (Table 3)

An analysis of variance employing only masculine and near-masculine males and feminine and near-feminine females (cf. Bem, 1974) was also performed. Androgynous and cross sex-typed individuals were eliminated[1]. This analysis indicated that both the main effect for interpersonal relationship and the interaction between sex of subject and

interpersonal relationship were reliable ($F(2,148)=3.70$, $p<.05$; and $F(2,148)=4.32$, $p<.01$, respectively). As can be seen in Table 3, both males and females allocated more equally in the personal condition than in the positional condition. In the ambiguous condition, however, females allocated more equally than did the males ($t(69) = 2.65$) $p<.01$. In this analysis, then, the traditional sex difference in allocation was replicated in the ambiguous condition. A similar analysis on the perception of relationship measure, however, did not indicate that female and male subjects differentially perceived the relationship in this critical condition.

The results of this study seem to indicate that perceived relationship is a strong determinant of allocation. Thus, Lerner's model of justice is supported. Furthermore, it is only when relationship cues were ambiguous and subjects were highly differentiated by sex role orientation that the traditional sex difference in allocation was found. Although these subjects did not differentially perceive the relationship, it was possible that they might, at least, have intended to create different relationships by their allocations. A follow-up study attempted to determine if this was the case.

For this study we selected 24 non-androgynous undergraduates, 13 males and 11 females, from a pool of

individuals who had completed BSRI's a few weeks earlier. Subjects were contacted in the same manner as in the previous study but were only given an ambiguous story to work with. In addition to the original measures, three new measures were added. First, subjects were asked to indicate on an 11-point scale (-5 to +5) what sort of relationship might be created by their allocation, from "person" at -5 through "none" at 0 to "position" at +5. Second, on a similar scale they were asked to indicate whether and what kind of relationship they intended to create with their allocation. Finally, they were asked to indicate their preference of a relationship (person or position) in a situation similar to that described in the story.

Although the sex difference in allocation did not reach a conventional level of statistical significance, probably due to the small number of subjects used in this follow-up study, the results were clearly in the expected direction. While only 46% of the males proposed a 50/50 split, 73% of the females did so ($x^2_1=1.73$, $p<.20$). If we are more generous with our parity category, allowing it to range from 50/50 to 60/40, the male/female difference is more marked with 54% of the males using parity versus 91% of the females ($x^2_1=3.96$, $p<.05$).

The subjects' perceptions of the relationship described in the story did replicate our earlier results, in that

there was no sex difference. As intended (and in contrast to our earlier study), on an 11-point scale (-5 person to +5 position) both males and females were unclear about whether the relationship was personal or positional (means of .62 and .00, respectively).

The three new measures yielded interesting data but no clear sex differences. Two-thirds of the subjects indicated that they had not intended to create a particular type of relationship with their allocation and that they would prefer a person relationship in the same situation. The means for males and females were quite similar on these measures, indicating no differential intention or preference of relationship. A major question, however, had been whether the subjects felt that the allocation would create or foster a particular kind of relationship. Although the sex difference did not reach a conventional level of statistical significance, females did tend to say their allocations would create person relationships to a greater extent than males (55% vs 23%, respectively, made ratings of -3 or below on the 11 point scale described above; $x^2=2.52$, $p<.15$). Moreover, this measure was highly correlated with allocation ($r_{22}=.72$, $p<.01$)[2]. Thus, it would seem that although most of the subjects claimed that they prefer person relationships and that they did not intend to create a relationship, in fact, they did feel that their

recommended allocation would create a particular kind of relationship --- and to the extent that there is a sex difference in the allocations, there is a difference in the type of relationship. More equitable allocations were seen to be more likely to create position relationships, and more equal allocations to create person relationships. This data, then, could be seen as support for the idea that the desire to create a relationship is mediating the gender difference in allocation. However, due to the failure to get a clear sex difference on the measure of relationship creation and the fact that so few subjects report any intention of creating a relationship this support is not as strong as one might wish. The strength of the correlation between the subjects' allocation and the measure of relationship that would be created[3] does suggest another role for relationship creation. That is, whatever may cause a particular allocation, the allocation does seem to lead to a clear perception of relationship. This would seem to support Lerner, Miller, and Holmes' (1976) suggestion that resource allocation could, in fact, be seen as a tool in the determination of future contacts.

Our results then appear to indicate three things:

1) When a relationship is defined for subjects, this definition is an important determinant of allocation for both sexes;

2) Only when relationship is not clearly either person or position, is a sex difference in allocation likely - and then only for traditionally sex-typed individuals; and

3) Regardless of how a reward is allocated, subjects of both sexes see the allocation as a determinant of future interactions.

These conclusions, then, point to the fact that perceived relationship is a critical variable in the reward allocation process, and suggest that it will be important to examine the consequences (and causes) of perceived relationships in subjects actually involved in allocating rewards.

Footnotes

1. 35 females and 37 males remained in the sample.

2. When examined within each sex, the correlations were as follows: Female: $r(9)=.71$, $p<.01$; and Male: $r(11)=.82$, $p<.01$.

3. The correlation of the creation of relationship (.72) was reliably stronger than that of the perceived relationship with the allocation (.37), at $p<.05$ ($t(21) = 2.65$).

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Table 1

	Mean Perceived Relationship		
	Interpersonal Relationship		
Sex of Subject	Personal	Positional	Ambiguous
Male	1.11	1.74	1.67
Female	1.06	1.78	1.77
	$(1.09)^1$	$(1.76)^2$	$(1.72)^2$

Note: The scale ranges from 1 (personal) to 2 (positional). Marginal means with different superscripts are different from each other at the 1% level by the Scheffe procedure.

Table 2

Mean Allocations

Sex of Subject	Interpersonal Relationship: Personal	Positional	Ambiguous
Male	1.37	1.69	1.68
Female	1.44	1.68	1.59
	$(1.40)^1$	$(1.69)^2$	$(1.64)^2$

Note: The scale ranges from 1 (50/50 split) to 3 (69-80/31-20 split). Marginal means with different superscripts are different from each other at the 1% level by the Scheffe procedure.

Table 3

Mean Allocations
(Androgynous Subjects Eliminated)

	Interpersonal Relationship		
Sex of Subject	Personal	Positional	Ambiguous
Male	1.38	1.65	1.81
Female	1.49	1.74	1.41
	$(1.43)^1$	$(1.70)^2$	$(161)^{12}$

Note: The scale ranged from 1 (50/50 split) to 3 (69-80/31-20 split). Marginal means with different superscripts are different from each other at the 1% by the Scheffe procedure.